

THE MODERN DEAD SEA AND THE LIVING WATERS

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A SERMON
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*“The waters shall be healed.”
Ezekiel 47:8.*

EZEKIEL is robed in dreadful tempest, and his whole book is “as the terrible crystal” for brightness, and for mystery, yet he often gives us visions of exceeding comfort. For instance, who can think without joy of that tender branch of the cedar which is to be planted by God in the mountain of the height of Israel, which shall grow so exceedingly that all fowl of every wing shall dwell in its branches? Do we not all rejoice that, whatever may become of the institutions of modern society, we have received a kingdom which cannot be moved? The kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, which began as a tender slip, is yet to increase till it is likened to a goodly cedar “upon a high mountain and eminent,” is not this a joy unspeakable? Think also of that other vision, so weird and strange, of a valley full of dead bones “very many” and “very dry.” What an answer does that vision give to the question of unbelief! “Can these dry bones live?” How plainly does the Lord answer, “I will put My spirit in you, and you shall live”! When I think of that goodly cedar, I see that the kingdom will come unto Christ, and when I think of the valley of dry bones, I am comforted concerning the masses around me. We, too, as we walk through this morgue of a city, may hope that life will conquer death, and an exceedingly great army, quickened by the Spirit of our God, shall yet rise from these dry bones.

The remarkable vision, which lies open before us, is exceedingly reassuring to those who are troubled by reason of the dreadful condition of the times—and which of us are not? The prophet bids us think of those waters, dreary and dreadful, known by the suggestive name of the Dead Sea! This was the “Chamber of Horrors” of the land of Canaan. Travelers describe it as a place of utter desolation. Lying in a deep hollow, some thirteen hundred feet below any other sea, the Dead Sea may be described as deep sunken into the earth, like the mouth of the abyss. Masses of bitumen float upon its surface, and line its shores. Sulfurous exhalations abound, and on its banks are hot sulfuric springs. Bathing in its thick brine is not pleasant, for it causes the skin to tingle with its acrid salts long afterwards. It is not desirable to linger upon the brink of it, neither is there anything to attract you to do so. Very scanty is the vegetation, few are the birds, and rare the living things. It is the domain of destruction. The sea is so salty that no fish can live in it, and though it has been asserted that smaller organisms exist in it, these have seldom been found, but on the contrary, the fish that come down into it from the Jordan die at once, and drifted shellfish are washed up dead upon the bank. Nothing of life loves the brine, the sulfur, and the bitumen of the Dead Sea. The slimy lake is, at seasons, dangerous to health, and even to life. Travelers have of late crossed it safely at the right season, but formerly those who made a voyage upon it scarcely returned to tell the tale, and before long sickened and died.

The doomed lake bears dark mysteries in its bosom, down deep in its depths lie the drowned cities of the plain, whose infamies provoked the wrath of heaven, and brought upon them a fire-shower such as earth has never known before or since. It may be that the briny waters hide mysteries of sin which were better hidden, for modern crime is fertile enough in inventions of filthiness, and needs no aid from the rottenness of antiquity. Thus, the Dead Sea is a place most dread and dismal, the bath of death, the haunt of despair, the home of desolation, and in these respects it is a fit picture of our fallen humanity, a truthful symbol of the whole world, which lies in the wicked one. The world of men is cursed by evils of

dreadful name. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." Mysteries of love in this lost world there are none, but mysteries of sin, and of judgment, and of the wrath of God, there are, in plenty. The world is a veritable Dead Sea upon a gigantic scale. Such also is the city in which we live; must I call it "modern Sodom"? Every wave that breaks upon the shore of this human lake now seems to wash up remains of monstrous things, unearthly, inhuman, beastly, and devilish. Fair islands, here and there, rise out of its dark deeps, the bright creations of God's grace, but all around them the waters cast up mire and dirt. God is at work creating new heavens and a new earth, and in the process forms of beauty are developed, but to this day the old unrenewed city remains a reeking copy of the hell which burns below. Those who have dared to look into its depths return with horror upon their faces to say that it were not lawful for a man to utter what they have seen. London is a simmering cauldron of vice and crime. O God! How long shall it be?

In certain respects such is every man's natural heart until he is renewed by grace. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and may be well typified by the Sea of Death. If we could but look into it with such eyes as God has, what would we not see? When we are led to gaze on it through our tears, because the Holy Spirit has anointed our eyes with eye salve, and we perceive things in their naked truth, we are distressed beyond expression. What a thing is human nature! Mr. Whitefield used to say that man is half beast and half devil; but to my mind he is, all beast and all devil if God does not hold him in check by the restraints of fear and the fetters of law. Let him alone, and who can imagine what man would grow to? All manner of iniquities, such as lust, and greed, and oppression, and drunkenness, and falsehood, and cruelty, and murder lurk within the human heart, like wild beasts in the jungle. No man knows what villainy he is capable of, he only needs to be placed under certain circumstances, and he will develop into a very fiend. Thus the world, the city, the heart are each symbolized by the Dead Sea. Can they ever be purged? Can these waters be healed? According to our text, the Lord says expressly, "*the waters shall be healed.*" Let us believe His promise, and take heart of hope from this good hour. Here is room, my brethren, for the faith which, like charity, "believes all things, hopes all things." If any of you desire to exercise a faith by which you can glorify God, believe that the world can yet be delivered from sin, believe that London can yet be made a holy city; believe that your own heart, by the power of God's Spirit, can be purified even as Christ is pure. Even when it seems to be furthest off from hope, even when we are staggered at the sin which surrounds us, we are still to believe that the Lord shall reign forever and ever, and sin and Satan shall be crushed under our Redeemer's foot. Let us believe in God as God deserves to be believed in, let us rely implicitly upon Omnipotence, and trust without a doubt in that strong will which can never be turned from its purpose of grace. "*The waters shall be healed,*" all the brine and bitumen of the Dead Sea shall not stop the divine work. The putrid waters of London shall be made sweet as the well of Bethlehem. The atrocities of war and oppression shall cease, and the reign of evil shall end, for the Lord has purposed it, and it shall be done. The kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, London must be won for Jesus, and our own hearts must be wholly His. "*The waters shall be healed.*"

Ezekiel saw in vision the means of the healing of the dreary Lake of Death, the method was simple, but effectual. What he saw represented the gospel dispensation. The whole system of divine grace, the gospel attended by the power of the Holy Spirit, the cross and all the truths that come out of it, the message of salvation, the preaching of faith, the testimony of God the Father to the redeeming work of His Son; all this is the river which flows down into this desert world by its own force, and is now making its way into the most horrible guilt and corruption, with set purpose, that the waters may be healed. I want to encourage your faith this morning in a time when that faith is very sorely tried. Be of good courage, for the waters, of which we all loathe drinking, shall be purified. "*The waters shall be healed.*"

I. And first, to encourage your faith, I bid you to CONSIDER THE PROMISE. The place wherein the promise is written, in plain black and white, upon the sacred page, is opened before your eyes. Put your finger on it, and let it rest there. Thus says Jehovah, "*The waters shall be healed.*"

We feel sure that this word of prophecy shall be accomplished to the letter in due time, because *He that made the promise is able to fulfill it.* Apart from us and all our weaknesses, apart from man and all his wickedness, God, who has spoken the word, will perform it without fail. The Lord knows what He

says, He speaks advisedly, and not after the manner of the rash and boastful, neither does His hand neglect to do what His lips have promised. He brings His supreme power and Godhead to carry out the word of His mouth. The promise of grace is the decree of Omnipotence—"The waters shall be healed." One "shall" of God is worth all the legions of an empire; yes, all the forces of the universe. "Shall," says God, and the event is sure. What can resist the thunder of His word? Who shall stay His hand, or frustrate His design? Hear, O unbelief, and doubt no more, "*The waters shall be healed!*"

The Lord will fulfill this word thoroughly. This promise shall not be kept to the ear only, but it shall be fulfilled in the largest conceivable sense. The prophet, in vision, saw the waters of the Dead Sea so completely healed that there were fish in it, yes, swarms of fish, and these fish so many that there was occupation for all those who cast the net, so that they stood from one shore to the other. Where there had been no life before, living things literally swarmed and teemed, as in the great main ocean itself. Brethren, when God speaks of what He is about to do in the world, by way of grace, interpret it very broadly, get no narrow ideas into your minds concerning the grace of the Infinite. When our Lord Jesus sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied, He will not have seen a handful of men here and there gathered to Him, but He will have seen a multitude that no man can number worshipping the Father, each one of whom shall eternally bless His name for deliverance from sin. What hosts have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Ah! Beloved, God will cleanse London perfectly clean when He puts His hand to it. Even this Augean stable shall yet be sacred as the temple of Jehovah! No cleansing of the outside of the cup and platter will God make, but He will purge out secret sins, both in high places and in cottages, and He will create for Himself in this place a city of priests. Glory be to His name for such a hope! Blessed be the Lord God, He will sanctify our hearts and spirits, in the secret parts He will implant truth, and in the hidden parts He will make us to know wisdom!

Observe that when God makes the promise on which my finger is still resting—for I love to press the very words, "The waters shall be healed"—He gives us an idea of how He will do it. *He will fulfill this word in connection with the present dispensation.* To my mind this is clear enough, from the fact that these waters flowed forth from Mount Zion. They flowed originally from that ancient hill of which God had said, "Here will I dwell forever." The healing stream proceeded from that sacred place, the Holy of Holies, on Mount Zion, which is the type of God's indwelling in His Son Jesus, and in His church. The rising river flowed hard by the altar of burnt-offering, and became visible to the prophetic eye as it trickled forth from under the closed door at the east end of the temple. These waters, in vision, were seen to flow towards the east, to create greenery in the desert, and to melt into the Dead Sea. From this I gather that our God means to use His church for His purposes of grace. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined." We believe that He means to win His ultimate triumphs by the preaching of the gospel. Whenever the coming of our Lord shall be—and oh, that it were today, for we never wanted Him more than now!—whenever His second advent shall take place, yet it shall not be a dishonor to the church, but it will be her glory to triumph with the King at her head. It may be that by His personal appearing she shall win the victory. If our Lord delays His coming, He will send the wondrous influences of the Divine Spirit in much greater abundance than today, and then His church shall work marvels in the land, and salvation shall adorn her. The King shall marshal His troops around the central city of His choice, and His church shall be glorious in the eyes of all men, because of the splendor of her Lord. Do not throw down your weapons, and say, "Christ must come and wage this war." Perhaps so, but still He will carry on the battle by His chosen people. It is ours to stand fast, like British squares in the day of battle. Hold the fort, because your Lord is coming. Do not abandon it under some idea that He will work after a novel fashion and dispense with the gospel and the testimony of His saints. I believe that the Lord Jesus will win the battle on the old lines, "Up, Guards, and at them!" Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears, for you must fight as long as you live, since the Lord has sworn to have war with Amalek from generation to generation. If you die at your posts, so be it, but never desert them. Till Jesus comes, gird yourselves and fight His battles, your rest remains, and it will be a full reward to you, but you have not yet come to it. By the river of God, which flows this day, *the waters shall be healed.*

Note, carefully, that this divine promise, "the waters shall be healed," *will not put aside instrumentality*, but when it is fulfilled it will call forth more abundant agencies. The waters run into the Dead Sea,

and purify its waters, then fish begin to multiply, and then man's part comes in, "The fishers shall stand upon it from En Gedi even unto En Eglaim." Rest assured that there will be plenty of fishers when by His healing process the Lord makes plenty of fish, we shall be fishers of men in right earnest when the times of refreshing shall come from His presence. The Lord does not intend to put the fishers on one side, any more than He will dismiss the reapers in the time of harvest. Mark how the Lord Jesus said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." He never intends the gospel net to be laid aside till all His elect are taken in it, and drawn out from the waters of sin and death. Those will be happy days when the Lord will cause the people to long for the gospel, when those horrid wretches, who are now lying asoak in the sulfurous lake of sin, shall become wholesome fish, and invite the fisher to cast his net. In those days many of you, my brethren, who never handled a net before, will be moved by a holy call to catch men, and you, my sisters, will have to help us with the rope to draw the net on shore. You, slothful Christian men and women, who have never gone to sea in this fishery, will then be moved to the work, and will say, like Peter, "I go a-fishing." All round the lake the prophet saw fishermen, and he says of the waters, "They shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many." Oh, for the day when every believer will be fishing for the souls of men! God send us that blessed time right speedily! On the strength of the promise now before us, if there were nothing else, let us look for such a consummation. "*The waters shall be healed*," purity shall prevail; the kingdom of God shall come. Our daily prayer shall not go up to heaven in vain. Let us again cry—"Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen."

II. Having asked you to consider the promise, I invite you, next, to CONSIDER THE WONDER OF THE HEALING WATERS, that we may be helped thereby to believe that healing will come even to the Dead Sea of this present evil world, this present sinful Babylon, this present deceitful heart.

The wonders of the waters which Ezekiel saw lay in many things. First, consider, *from where they came*. These waters sprang from the midst of Jerusalem, from the secret place of God's throne, and this was why they were so potent. The twelfth verse ascribes the fruit-producing power of the waters to this—"because they issued out of the sanctuary." In that sanctuary was the throne of Jehovah, eternal sovereignty is the fountainhead of those gracious decrees in which the Lord has purposed to do good to the sons of men. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and in the freeness of His sovereign will He has purposed that this Dead Sea of humanity shall yet be healed. The healing waters flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. As God is God, He has decreed and purposed to redeem His people, and in that decree and purpose is the fountain of good to men.

These waters flowed in the vision hard by the altar of burnt-offering. Learn from this that the one channel of mercy to the sons of men is by the sacrifice of Christ. By that altar, where our great High Priest offered up Himself once for all, there flows the river of life. Since Christ has died, the world must yet be blessed. Those drops of blood that fell on Calvary were never gathered up, and they have left the broad crimson mark of the redeeming Lord upon this globe of ours, and therefore His it must be. Mankind shall be delivered from utter destruction because in Christ Jesus our God has found a ransom. There is hope in this, that "*the waters shall be healed*."

These waters, though they flowed unseen across the temple area, presently bubbled up from under the threshold of the door of the house. You know who is the Door of the temple of God, by Him we enter in unto God, and by Him God comes forth in blessing unto us. The waters flowed from below, welling up from "the deep that lies under," in the person and work of our Lord. Salvation comes not to us from any of the sons of men, but from the depths of God's own heart. Streams of ever-flowing mercy flow to us through our Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be His name!

When the waters first appeared, the prophet saw them trickling from under the closed door, and this suggests another interpretation. The east door was shut, according to the vision recorded in the previous chapter, but the waters gushed forth from under the threshold. Old Judaism had its door closed against us Gentiles, and yet the gospel came from it to the nations. Israel's door is now shut till the Prince shall come and enter through it, yet from under its threshold the river of the gospel flowed to us Gentiles. Holy men of Jewish race came forth to tell of salvation bought with blood, and justification perfected for

faith, and by their means the heathen received the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The stream began in the eternal purpose; it flowed through the sacrifice of Christ, and proceeded out of the midst of that old temple whose gate was shut. In Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth are blessed. Surely that which comes from God's purpose through the sacrifice of Christ cannot be in vain. If God could make old Judaism to bud and blossom with the gospel, what can He not do? If from under the shut gate the waters came gushing forth in gladsome stream to us perishing heathen, they can still flow to the vilest of the vile.

Note next, as a wonder in connection with these waters, *how they increased*. They deepened so fast that, although there was but a little streamlet at the beginning, within less than a mile there were waters to swim in, yes, they had become so deep and broad that the prophet had to use an expression in the dual, signifying a double stream, the flood had become too deep and wide to be passed over. These waters were not fed by rivulets running into them, but they miraculously grew of themselves. In the vision they advanced from being ankle deep to being up to the knee, and then up to the loins, and then they rose to be deep, unfathomable waters. All this the prophet tested by, his own wading into them. Now, if this happened by God's power, and if this happened so speedily, we may look for other marvels, "The waters shall be healed"; the Dead Sea shall yet teem with life. You and I have waded into these waters, have we not? If so, we know how they have increased upon us. Do you not remember when you rejoiced to have received a little grace, so that it washed your feet, and your life was cleansed? Do you not remember how very speedily these waters were up to your knees, and you had power with God in prayer? It was but a few hours more before your heart was comforted, and your inmost spirit was made glad, for the waters were up to your loins. Very soon, perhaps within twenty-four hours, you were swimming in streams of heavenly love, as you found that Christ was yours, your God, your heaven, your all. Do you not see that the God who has done all this for you can do as much for others? Can He not heal the waters of the Dead Sea of our day? Let us hope on, work on, and believe in God to the end. Putting our finger again upon that promise, let us rest assured that "*the waters shall be healed*."

Rapidly—for I have to be brief where there is so much to be said—notice *what these waters produced*. They began to flow, and very soon vegetation came into the wilderness. They flowed into the desert, and into the Acacia Vale, as Joel calls it, and soon, on both sides of the river, there were trees, and all of a sudden, the trees were bearing fruit! Wherever the gospel goes it carries life, and growth, and fruit with it. The fruits were for man's nourishment; these were the ordained food of Paradise, the best provender for man at his best. What food there is in the gospel! Wherever it flows, the famine of the soul ceases. The gospel contains all manner of fruit, for all sorts of seasons and appetites: food for the young, and food for the old; food for the feeble, and food for the strong; food for the happy, and food for the sad. This tree of life brings forth fruit abundantly, constantly, and speedily. The leaves of the trees of life contained medicine, full of mystic virtue; they were for the healing of the people. Whatever diseases afflict men, they have but to pluck these leaves, and apply them and health follows. Oh, that blessed gospel, it has had a double effect for our good, for it has fed our souls, and healed our infirmities! Well might its waters be called a double stream. Do you not know that it is thus singularly useful? If you have never eaten of its fruit, I must seem to be talking nonsense to you. If you have never been sick, and felt the healing power of its leaves, I must seem to mock you with delusions. But if you have been hungering and thirsting, you know what these streams and these fruits are, and if you have been sick unto death, you have found in God's grace a medicine better than the balm of Gilead, and it has made you whole. If the gospel can thus cause trees of life to grow, *the waters shall be healed*, the horrible Dead Sea of lust shall yet be purified, the sulfurous breath of vice shall yet be blown away, the death of sin shall yet give place to holy life, and the Lord alone shall be exalted where before He has been dishonored.

As a further wonder, note *where the stream flowed*. One would have thought that such a clear crystal stream as this, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, would have sought a pure channel for itself among the gardens of the Lord, but instead of that, we are told, "These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea, which, being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed." What a mercy it is that the gospel does go into the desert! Think of what this island used to be, when our ancestors wandered about in their nakedness among its oak groves.

Think of the times when the great wicker image was set up, and the Druids surrounded it, and that image was crammed full of hundreds of men and women, who were all to be consumed in one dread fire, while the people stood by to see their fellow creatures offered to their national Moloch. That is all over now. No longer is the mistletoe cut with the golden sickle, or the fierce deity appeased with blood of men. The missionary came and preached the gospel, and the Druids ceased out of the land. They were both the legislature and the hierarchy, but they could not stand before the divine truth. They were everybody *then*, but they are nobody *now*. I do not know what may happen here yet, but I do know this, that when the gospel comes, the images, the idols, the filthy things, the cruel things, the horrible things, must go. The gospel is still sent to sinners, and it will save sinners. We are to preach the gospel to every creature, “beginning at Jerusalem”; and He who bade us do this will not permit us to labor in vain. The river of life purified Britain once, and it will cleanse it yet again, “*The waters shall be healed.*”

The waters ran down into the horrible sea. You would have said as you stood there, “No, do not waste these pure floods in that hell lake! Do not let them disappear in pollution! Jordan for many years has been lavishing her silver streams upon this Dead Sea, and it has absorbed them all, but it has not been made a whit the purer, and every fish that has drifted down the Jordan has died as soon as it has touched this detestable lake. Do not pour the heavenly river into such a Pandemonium.” Many speak thus nowadays, “Do not meddle with this vice and wickedness. Do not even hear about it, for it will pollute you. Forget its foul flow, it is sulfurous as Tophet, the smell of such iniquity will choke you!” This avoidance of evil is natural and safe, but what is to become of this Dead Sea if the precious crystal stream does not flow into it? Will God abandon our race to the devil? Would He have His church abandon her function of salting the earth? I do not believe it. I tell you there is to be a link made by almighty grace between the temple at Jerusalem and the very site of Sodom and Gomorrah, a silver stream is yet to traverse the space between the throne of the Most High and the foul Dead Sea, mercy is to triumph over judgement, and righteousness is to conquer sin. It shall yet be said on earth and sung in heaven, “Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” Blessed be His name that to the very chief of sinners this life-stream has flowed, and will continue to flow till time shall be no more! Who can diminish this flood? Not even he that glories to drink up Jordan at a draught. Who can divert it? It is not to be turned by the will of man. Who can destroy its saving force? Not even the Dead Sea itself shall be able to contend against the healing energy of this wondrous river. Let us begin to sing of the river whose streams make us glad. Let our spirits break out with exultation, for “*the waters shall be healed.*”

III. Thirdly, for a moment or two I want you to CONSIDER THE EFFICACY OF THE WATERS. I will quit the figure in some measure in order to explain how the gospel is adapted to heal the wickedness of men. “What does the gospel do?” asks one. I answer—in the gospel we set before men the horrible nature of sin, and thus we lead them to turn from it. He does not preach the gospel who fails to declare that sin slew the Son of God. The cross unveils the baseness and ingratitude of sin, and makes it to appear exceedingly sinful. The gospel brings men to know the unchangeableness of the divine law, and that sin is the transgression of the law, and that every sin will have its just recompense of reward. There is no preaching the gospel unless you declare the terrors of the Lord. God has winked at the times of man’s ignorance, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, for sin is not a thing to be played with, but a deadly enemy to be shaken off into the fire, as Paul shook off the viper from his hand. All this tends to the removal of human sin.

The gospel gives man hope, and that is a grand thing for the degraded and self-condemned. To have a hope that you can be a better man is a great help in escaping from sin. To hope that you can be renewed, and become like the angels of God, though now you are like the devils in hell, is a great encouragement to turn to God. My gospel bids me go to the very vilest of the vile, and bid him hope. I count no man so loathsome that God may not look upon him in love. What a gospel this is, for hope is the beginning of amendment, the first letter of the alphabet of reform! Where there is no hope, the sinner gives the reins to his lusts, and thinks it wise to enjoy his sin while he may. O souls, this is gospel indeed to you, that there is forgiveness, forgiveness even for loud and crying sins!

The gospel purifies men because it gives them Christ Himself to be their Savior. It brings them the Son of God to be their salvation. It says, “Poor souls, you cannot help yourselves! Here is One on whom

help has been laid, even a mighty One! Here is One that took your sin, and put it away. Here is One that will be a Friend to you in your worst times of need. Here is One that is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, lay your burdens down at His dear feet, for He has a fellow feeling for you. Here is a Leader and Commander for you, who will lead you forth from the slavery of sin. Come, buckle on your harness to war against your sins; for He will give you power to overcome them.” I tell you there is no gospel like a gospel that says, “Sinner, here is Christ for you!” Poor, wearied, burdened, heavy-laden sinner, take Christ to be yours, and you have all you want between this place and heaven!

Moreover, the gospel does not merely tell men certain truths, but it gives life, and power, and grace to them. There comes with the gospel a power almighty, which changes the nature of the man; touches his understanding, and enlightens it; touches his will, and changes it; touches his affections, and purifies them. This power is the Holy Spirit, equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son—nothing less than very God of very God. This Holy Spirit goes forth with the gospel, giving hearts of flesh, causing men to be born again, and creating all things new. The truth comes not in word only, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. The waters shall be healed by such a gospel, attended by such a power as this. I heard it said the other day, “We do not want more preachers, for the supply is more than equal to the demand.” But then, the gospel creates its own demand. Wherever the gospel comes, it makes men thirsty for it, it makes men hungry for itself; it does its own work without aid from any foregoing human preparedness. It does not even ask to be left alone; it will accomplish its purpose even though it is tampered with. Its own essential omnipotence secures its own preservation, enlargement, and success. How I marvel at those who quit the heavenly stream for their own little brooks and streams! A certain divine has lately made a discovery, by which he is going to pour a flood of light upon the Bible. The Bible, it seems, has been a dark, mysterious Book to our forefathers, though martyrs died for it, and saints were comforted by it, yet these poor beings were in the dark for want of nineteenth century discoveries! At length the hour has come, and the man with it, a great genius has arisen, who has found light with which to illuminate the Bible. We used to sing—

*“A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none.”*

Are we to alter our tune, and cheerfully accept the contributions of this uncommon person? I think not. Did you ever hear of a madman who, with a wooden match, determined to show up the sun in the middle of the day? Come here, you that never saw the sun before! It is a dim affair, but we will strike this match, and then you shall see what you shall see! Brethren, this talk is all foolishness, neither the scientists nor the divines can light up the Light of God. This Book is clear enough of itself, and this gospel is mighty enough of itself, without the aid of human wisdom. It will not be cleared, but clouded, by modern dotings upon evolution. The river of the gospel will force its own way despite modern thought, it will win and conquer, whoever may oppose.

The power of the gospel to cleanse this horrible Lake of Gomorrah lies in this, it touches the heart, it moves the affections, it changes the nature, it renews the entire man. Moreover, it binds men in a holy brotherhood, and leads them back to their Father, and their God. Its torrent bears away the pride which makes one man stand at a distance from his fellow; it drowns the oppression by which the great man thinks to trample down the poor. Its waves say as they flow, “All you are brethren and one is your Master, even Christ.” Thus it works a holy revolution among men, and a restoration of the royal rights of Jesus. God send it, send it to us, to London, and to the entire world, and to His name shall be the praise!

IV. I must close by noticing, fourthly, THE LESSON OF THE WATERS. What is their voice to us today?

I think the first lesson is that *God works in very unexpected ways*. There is that Dead Sea. We look down upon it with horror. Can it ever be healed? It never would have occurred to you or to me that yonder temple, so pure and sacred, would have a spring welling up from under its threshold, so little and tiny that you might cover it with your hand at first, and yet from that spring, should come a sufficient purgation even for Sodom’s sea. The Lord knows how to do His own work, and He does it by apparently

slender means. “Who has despised the day of small things?” Mark the little brook at Jerusalem, when the number of the men was about one hundred and twenty, that stream grew within a few days, till we read that “the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”—till another day or so after we read, “And the number of the men was about five thousand.” That small beginning most rapidly increased, is increasing, and will increase. The gospel has the same potency and force about it today that it has had in ages past. Always expect the unexpected, reckon that God has great things in reserve. He shot yon arrow, but His quiver is still full. He has scarcely begun the battle yet. Jehovah of Hosts has stricken here a blow and there a blow, but behold He comes forth to do greater execution by the sword of His strength! O great Prince, “ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach terrible things”! Come quickly, we pray You.

What else ought we to learn? As the Dead Sea has to be cleansed by that stream of water, *all that we can do is, first of all, pray*. Pray, “Spring up, O Well!” Pray that out of the midst of each of us may flow rivers of Living Water. Pray that God would work by His Spirit yet more abundantly. The Holy Spirit has descended, we do not need Him to be poured out, but we would realize His power in another fashion, we would descend into the floods of His sacred influences, we beg of Him to baptize us into His mighty waters, and sweep every sin away before Him.

When we have done that, what next have we to do? Why, *begin fishing*. Wherever this stream rushes along, there will be fish; in this London there are fish now. Go and fish in the streets, fish in the street corners, and fish in any little room you can open, fish in the great crowds if they will come to you. The stream is breeding swarms of life, be you fishers of men. God says to His church today, “I have much people in this city.” Do not despair; God has an elect company in every parish of London. Get to work by this sea, and stand there from En Gedi to En Eglaim, from Highgate to Norwood, from Stratford to Kensington, from one end of the city to the other. God help you to cast the net!

Above all, we must not come to be the marshes of which we read just now. Certain spots of land were overflowed by the river and the sea, but afterwards they were left high and dry as the stream retired, so that they were neither sea nor dry ground, but marshes. Beware of this! The most abominable beings out of hell are Christians without Christianity, and there are plenty of them. They have “a name to live, and are dead.” They have no love to men, nor love to God, nor zeal for Christ’s glory, and yet they talk of being Christians! Beware of high professors, who are unholy livers! These are jackdaws with peacocks’ feathers stuck upon them, and they shall one day be stripped of all their plumes. These are not the children of the living God, but children of the devil. When they are brought before the Judge, to have their true parentage discovered, they shall be cut in sunder. So the great Solomon will ordain! Oh, that you and I may be true-born children of God! May we never be among those mongrels who are neither heathen nor Jews, neither Christians nor outsiders! May we be one thing or the other! Let us heed the voice of the prophet—“If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.” All the blessing that ever comes from heaven will never save neutrals, for “the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt.” God deliver us from such a curse, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 2:8-15;
EZEKIEL 47:1-12; REVELATION 22:1-15.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—19, 874, 353.**

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